



National Parks beyond the Nation: Global Perspectives on "America's Best Idea" (Public Lands History)

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“The idea of a national park was an American invention of historic consequences marking the beginning of a worldwide movement,” the U.S. National Park Service asserts in its 2006 *Management Policies*. *National Parks beyond the Nation* brings together the work of fifteen scholars and writers to reveal the tremendous diversity of the global national park experience—an experience sometimes influencing, sometimes influenced by, and sometimes with no reference whatever to the United States.

Writer and historian Wallace Stegner once called national parks “America’s best idea.” The contributors to this volume use that exceptionalist claim as a starting point for thinking about an international history of national parks. They explore the historical interactions and influences—intellectual, political, and material—within and between national park systems in Canada, New Zealand, South Africa, Indonesia, Antarctica, Brazil, and other countries. What is the role of science in the history of these preserves? Of politics? What purposes do they serve: Conservation? Education? Reverence toward nature? Tourist pleasure?

People have thought differently about national parks at different times and in different places; and neat physical boundaries have been disrupted by wandering animals, human movements, the spread of disease, and climate change. Viewing parks around the world, at various scales and across national frontiers, these essays offer a panoptic view of the common and contrasting cultural and environmental features of national parks worldwide.

If national parks are, as Stegner said, “absolutely American,” they are no less part of the world at large. *National Parks beyond the Nation* tells us as much about the multifarious and changing ideas of nature and culture as about the framing of those ideas in geographic, temporal, and national terms.

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